

What is claimed is:

1. A method for use in a wireless network, said wireless network comprising a plurality of base stations, each serving a plurality of users via a plurality of communication channels, said method comprising the steps of:

5 transmitting an alert message from a set of said base stations, to a plurality of users, said alert message including the identity of one of said plurality of communications channels; and

transmitting a broadcast message from said set of base stations to said plurality of users on said one of said plurality of communications channels.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein said wireless network also includes a control channel, wherein said step of transmitting said alert message comprises transmitting said alert message on said control channel.

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3. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of transmitting an alert message further comprises the step of transmitting a permission parameter as a part of said alert message.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of transmitting said alert message  
20 further comprises repeatedly transmitting an alert message on a periodic basis while said broadcast message is transmitted.

5. The method of claim 1 further including the step of, after said set of base stations complete transmission of said broadcast message, said set of base stations

sending a further alert message to inform the users that the channel will expire in a predetermined time.

6. The method of claim 5 further including, after expiration of said  
5 predetermined time, said set of said base stations ceasing to broadcast on said communications channel, and returning said channel for further use.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said one of said plurality of channels is  
10 selected from a reserved group of said plurality of channels.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said one of said plurality of channels is  
selected from a list of idle ones of said plurality of channels.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said alert message includes the identity of  
15 said one of said plurality of communications channels such that each of said plurality of base stations selects the same one of said plurality of channels.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of base stations  
selects one of said plurality of channels based on channel availability, wherein said  
20 channel may be different between each of said base stations.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein said broadcast message originates at an  
information source remote from said base stations.

12. A wireless unit for use with a wireless communications network, wherein said wireless unit receives control messages on a preassigned channel and communicates content on a channel that is assigned for such communication, said wireless unit comprising:

5 means for receiving a first alerting message indicating that a broadcast message is imminent, and indicating the communication channel of said broadcast message;

means for alerting a user of said wireless unit that said broadcast message is imminent; and

10 means for setting up said wireless unit for receiving said communications channel.

13. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 further comprising:

15 means for storing a current state of said wireless unit before setting up said wireless unit for receiving said communications channel; and

means for receiving a second alerting message indicating that said broadcast message is over and for automatically restoring said wireless unit to said stored state upon receipt of said second alerting message.

20 14. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 further comprising user means for selecting whether to receive said broadcast message.

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15. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said wireless unit uses CDMA protocol, wherein each of said communications channels is extracted using a corresponding one of a plurality of Walsh functions.

5           16. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said wireless unit uses an analog air interface protocol, wherein each of said communications channels is extracted using an FM receiver tuned to a corresponding frequency.

10           17. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said wireless unit uses a TDMA protocol, wherein each of said communications channels is extracted using a receiver tuned to a corresponding frequency and selecting appropriate time slots of a received TDM data stream.

15           18. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said means for alerting comprises a user-audible signal.

            19. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said means for alerting comprises a user-visible signal.

20           20. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 14 wherein said wireless unit includes a keypad, wherein said user means for selecting comprises entering one or more digits on said keypad.

21. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 14 wherein said wireless unit includes a keypad, wherein said user means for selecting comprises a button separate from said keypad.

5           22. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said wireless unit includes a display, wherein said display indicates when said wireless unit is receiving said broadcast message.

10 *Ant 5*           23. A wireless unit in accordance with claim 12 wherein said communications channels each comprises a forward link and a reverse link, said wireless unit includes means for blocking automatically said reverse link of said communications channel for the duration of said broadcast message.

15           24. A base station for use in a wireless network, said base station serving a plurality of users via a plurality of communication channels, said base station comprising:

              means for transmitting an alert message to a plurality of users, said alert message including the identity of one of said plurality of communications channels; and

20           means for transmitting a broadcast message to said plurality of users on said one of said plurality of communications channels.

25. A base station in accordance with claim 24 wherein said means for transmitting said alert message comprises a control channel.

26. A base station in accordance with claim 24 further including means for sending a further alert message to inform the users that the channel will expire shortly after said base station completes transmission of said prerecorded message.

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27. A method for use in a wireless network, said wireless network comprising a plurality of base stations, each serving a plurality of users via a plurality of communication channels, said method comprising the steps of:

transmitting an alert message from a set of said base stations, to a plurality of users, said alert message including a dialing instruction by which said users may request to receive a broadcast message;

receiving a call placed by one of said plurality of users in accord with said dialing instruction; and

responsive to said call, transmitting a broadcast message from at least one of said set of base stations to said one user on one of said plurality of communications channels.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said communications channels each comprises a forward link and a reverse link and further comprising the step of:

blocking automatically said reverse link of said communications channel for the duration of said broadcast message.